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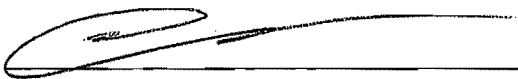
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Applying Strategic Lessons from Past and Current Afghanistan Campaigns**

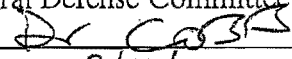
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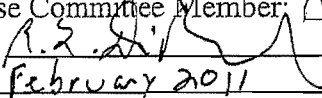
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Executive Summary

Title: A Bid for Success in Operation Enduring Freedom: Applying Strategic Lessons from Past and Current Afghanistan Campaigns

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Thesis: An historical analysis of strategic objectives and outcomes of military operations conducted in Afghanistan during the First Anglo-Afghan War, the Soviet invasion, and the on-going Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF), yields instructive lessons that can be applied to meet the needs of the Afghans and ultimately create sustainable stability in the Afghanistan state.

Discussion: In 1839, the British saw Afghanistan as the buffer-state that they needed to protect their interests in India from both Napoleon and Russia.¹ The British quickly took control of the Kabul government and installed new leadership, but failed to provide adequate security, satisfy the needs of the Afghan people, or appreciate and utilize their tribal structures, subsequently losing an army as they fled the country. The Soviets and United States experienced similar failures when they invaded in 1979 and 2001, respectively. For the United States, after initial success, a Quetta-based Taliban insurgency returned, similar to that which the British and Soviets faced in their time. Until 2009, it looked like NATO was doomed to meet the same fate as the British and Soviets. Ultimately, NATO's ability to succeed in creating "sustainable stability" hinges on their ability to do what others, including nearly all Afghan rulers have not—meet the needs of the people with a thorough understanding of how the population interacts at the tribal level.²

Conclusion: Historical lessons of failure from the First Anglo-Afghan War, the Soviet invasion, and the last nine and half years of OEF provide many lessons of what to do to achieve strategic success: support the needs of the Afghan people, accept that their solutions will not be our solutions, assist them in creating the security conditions for governance, economic development, and reconstruction to take place, ensure restraint in our approach, *and then depart.*

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Preface

In recent years, a multitude of historians, journalists, and military professionals have written on the subject of United States and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) policies in Afghanistan. Normally these articles and books point to flaws in current strategy. I do not find much writing on how to best support the strategy as outlined in the May 2010 National Security Strategy using historical experiences to achieve our strategic objectives. Consequently, I conducted research to identify historical themes of success and failure and then applied those themes to support the current strategic objectives as defined in the National Security Strategy for Afghanistan. In the course of my research, I found many common themes of failure, and no repetitive themes of success. I chose the First Anglo-Afghan War and the Soviet invasion because they represented situations most similar to the one faced by the United States after 9/11: invading to overthrow the Afghan government and create a stable geographic buffer to further the invaders' interests.

The British invaded Afghanistan and overthrew the government in the hope of creating a security buffer for their economic interests in British India. The Soviets invaded Afghanistan and overthrew the government to bolster the spread of communist political ideology and to contain radical Islam on their southern flank. The United States invaded Afghanistan and overthrew the government to create stability and security in an area that had fostered numerous Islamic-ideologically driven attacks against the West, culminating in the attacks of 9/11.

In all three cases, at the outset, the invaders failed to recognize and support the needs of the different factions of Afghan people. In all three cases, the invader lacked the capabilities necessary to provide security to support governmental reform. The British failed, and in the process, they destroyed significant portions of Afghan infrastructure and helped reaffirm distaste for invaders that NATO experiences today. The Soviets failed and withdrew, also destroying significant portions of Afghan infrastructure, while seeing the exodus of a large portion of the educated population. Between the Soviets' actions, and actions taken by third parties to ensure that Soviets' failure, the conditions were set to facilitate the radical Islamic fundamentalism that we face today. If we are to prevent failure in OEF, we must look to history, learn from it, make tough decisions, and apply them. This paper provides recommendations on how to apply relevant historical lessons in a bid for success for OEF.

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Introduction

Since the British invaded Afghanistan in the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842), no external military expedition has created “sustainable stability” for the Afghan state.³ Through the end of the Soviet invasion (1979-1989) these expeditions resulted in tactical disaster to the invader and a tremendous cost to the Afghan population, in terms of both destroyed infrastructure and a purged population. The invaders failed to satisfy the needs of the various factions of Afghan people and their social and political organizations, resulting in the Afghans taking a ferociously violent approach to reject foreign forces. An historical analysis of strategic objectives and outcomes of military operations conducted in Afghanistan during the First Anglo-Afghan War, the Soviet invasion, and the on-going Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) yield instructive, similar lessons that can be applied to meet the needs of the Afghans and ultimately create sustainable stability in the Afghanistan state. This paper will examine the causes of failure for the First Anglo-Afghan War, the Soviet invasion, and OEF through 2010, focusing on commonality in lessons learned. Recommendations on how to apply these lessons in a bid for success for OEF will then be discussed.

Afghanistan’s Geographic Importance, and Its Limitations on Government

While the reasons for expeditions into Afghanistan varied over the last two hundred years, Afghanistan’s topography and position in Central Asia directly influenced the strategic policies of the invader. Afghanistan’s topography can best be described as regionally compartmentalized with a combination of desert plains, significant mountain ranges, and a multitude of rivers isolating various regions. This severely limits the ability for a central government to exercise control over its entire population, and it allows for any group or tribe of people to live in relative isolation. Afghanistan’s position in Central Asia makes the country a

buffer between competing states. Such was the case in British, Russian, and United States-led incursions into Afghanistan over the past two hundred years.

The First Anglo-Afghan War

"Afghanistan has a history of confounding the optimism of invaders."⁴ *David Loyn*

British and Russian expansionist policies, coupled with the Tislt treaty between Russia and Napoleon brought on the so-called 'Great Game,' and the First Anglo-Afghan War.⁵ The Great Game was a struggle for influence and control in central Asia. Russia was determined to ensure fair trade practices in central Asia. Britain wished to protect their economic interests in India.⁶ As the British solidified their hold on modern-day India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh in 1808, they foresaw an invasion of their territory by a Napoleonic or Russian army via routes across the central Asian steppes or Persia, or an invasion by the Afghans themselves.⁷ Britain did not want to fight Russia; their objective was to neutralize Russia's ability to influence India.⁸ At the same time, Britain knew very little of what went on between the Hindu Kush and the Suleiman Mountains.⁹ British ignorance of the geography of Afghanistan and its people, coupled with their desire to ensure the security of the Raj, ultimately led to the initiation of, and tactical failure in, the First Anglo-Afghan War.

Mountstuart Elphinstone mounted an expedition from Delhi in 1808 to explore Afghanistan and set conditions to provide for British India's security.¹⁰ Getting as far as Peshawar, Elphinstone formed an alliance with the Amir of Kabul, Shah Shuja.¹¹ The alliance was defensive in nature and focused on the needs of the British, while failing to incorporate the security needs of the Afghans and their leader.¹² Shah Shuja's rule only lasted another six months after the British-Afghan alliance was formed, when Shah Shuja was defeated by the Peshawar-based Sikh leader, Ranjit Singh. Shah Shuja went into exile in British-ruled India and the Peshawar region fractured from control by Kabul.¹³ The ensuing alliance between the Sikhs

and the British was developed to ensure that the British could cross through Peshawar and over the Suleiman Mountains to access Afghanistan as needed—this alliance was British-centric, and would be rejected by Ranjit Singh when it was needed.¹⁴

In the years between Elphinstone's expedition and the beginning of the First Anglo-Afghan War, Britain continued its exploration of Afghanistan. In 1837, Sir Alexander Burnes, the last of the British envoys before the First Anglo-Afghan War, attempted to secure a treaty with Dost Mohammed, the Amir of Kabul.¹⁵ At the time, Burnes recognized the popular support of Dost Mohammed and believed he could be made to represent British interests (Burnes later changed his position).¹⁶ When Dost Mohammed took power, he donned a cloak that was purported to have belonged to the Prophet Mohammed, and manipulated the concept of jihad as a call to war, vice an inward struggle, as he united frontier tribes in holy war against the Sikhs.¹⁷ Mullah Mohammad Omar's (the Taliban founder in 1994) was to repeat this symbolic reenactment almost a century later. Overall, Dost Mohammed was dissatisfied with the British alliance to the Sikhs, wanting to place Peshawar back under Kabul's control.¹⁸

Further complicating the situation were the conflicting viewpoints of the British ambassador to Persia, a Russian representative who visited Afghanistan, and a third party individual that had once worked for the British East India Company (EIC) who purported to represent British views in Afghanistan. Compounding the conflicting viewpoints was a combined fundamental misunderstanding of tribal law and existing feuds.¹⁹ Sir Claude Wade, a political officer within EIC, blocked Burnes' position of support to Dost Mohammed, as Wade and Shah Shuja had developed a familial relationship after years in close proximity while Shah Shuja was in exile in India.²⁰ Wade believed that Afghans wanted Shah Shuja back in power over Dost Mohammed and had Shah Shuja agree to pay homage to the Sikhs, and had the Sikhs

sign a treaty to support Shah Shuja.²¹ Wade's beliefs about popular support for Shah Shuja were wrong. Additionally, Wade failed to understand the clan struggle between the Sadozai and Barakzai clans that existed since Ahmed Shah Durrani perished in 1772.²² At the time of Durrani's death, the Sadozai were to rule and the Barakzai agreed to serve as the "wazir," or chief minister of the state.²³ Dost Mohammed was from the Barakzai tribe.²⁴ Shah Shuja was from the Sadozai tribe.²⁵

Without a treaty established between Britain and Dost Mohammed, and with a smorgasbord of interests represented, conflict escalated, finally resulting in the British deciding to attack Afghanistan to supplant Dost Mohammed for Shah Shuja.²⁶ The British-written 'Simla Manifesto,' signed on October 1, 1838, accused Dost Mohammed of attacking the Sikhs and maintaining a "hostile policy" towards British, and therefore declared war.²⁷ Elphinstone had misgivings concerning the declaration of war, believing that Afghanistan would be easy to seize, but difficult to secure.²⁸

Based on the alliance between Britain and the Sikhs, the Sikhs were to allow a British-led army, the Army of the Indus, to use the Khyber Pass.²⁹ Additionally, Ranjit Singh was to supply forces for the attack.³⁰ Ranjit Singh never had any intention of fulfilling his promises, ultimately resulting in British forces attacking without Sikh support, while also having to use the Bolan Pass, vice the Khyber Pass—a significant logistical challenge.³¹ Consequently, Kandahar became the first British objective.³²

The British made quick work of Kandahar.³³ In a sort of foreshadowing of the troubles to come with tribal support for Shah Shuja, few Afghans turned-out in a parade hosted for Shah Shuja after the British failed to take the necessary time to build relationships with the locals.³⁴ At Ghazni, the British second objective, the British had their first encounter with Islamic

fundamentalists but succeeded in destroying the enemy force in the Ghazni castle after a daring attack that hinged on the success of Lieutenant Henry Durand's ability to make a breach of the castle.³⁵ Durand was of the same family that would eventually draw the Afghan-Pakistan border through the Suleiman Mountains in 1893, dividing the Pashtun tribe, creating strife that lasts to this day.³⁶

In ignorance of "Pashtunwali," after securing the castle at Ghazni, British forces failed to stop the murder of remnants of the Ghazni fundamentalist force—Hindustanis who had pledged their support to Islamic jihad—by Shah Shuja.³⁷ The Ghaznis are a sub-tribe to the Pashtuns, and Pashtuns are governed by "Pashtunwali," their code of honor which contains various principles.³⁸ One of the principles, *badal*, or justice, requires a Pashtun to seek justice or take revenge against a wrong-doing.³⁹ In this case, the wrong-doing occurred by both a foreigner, the British who failed to stop the murder of the Ghaznis, and a Pashtun of the Sadozai clan (Shah Shuja). Pashtunwali's *badal* most likely played a role in motivating Pashtuns, especially Ghaznis, to violently reject foreigners, as well as Sadozais in future conflicts.

As the Army of the Indus continued their advanced, Ranjit Singh died, as did his successor, freeing the British to use the Khyber Pass with elements of the Sikh army in support.⁴⁰ With the advent of Ranjit Singh's death, Wade changed his position and wished to leave Dost Mohammed in charge.⁴¹ This proposition was rejected by the Governor-General of the EIC.⁴² The presence of a Sikh army west of the Suleiman Mountains likely enflamed Afghan sentiments toward the British and would later cause civil unrest towards Shah Shuja who was viewed as a British lackey.⁴³

Before Dost Mohammed fled, he offered to serve as the *wazir* to Shah Shuja, a move that would have restored the rightful order of tribal influence and power in Afghanistan with a

Barakzai supporting a Sadozai.⁴⁴ The EIC (and tacitly the British government) mistakenly wanted nothing to do with Dost Mohammed and rejected the offer.⁴⁵ With Dost Mohammed out of the way, Kabul fell without a fight.⁴⁶ Mistakenly, a British officer remarked that he believed the war was over after the fall of Kabul, yet it would go on for another three years and result in the destruction of the British garrison in Kabul.⁴⁷ Similar proclamations would be made in future Afghan conflicts, with similar results.

As Dost Mohammed sowed the seeds of dissent from north of the Hindu Kush, the British and their newly installed Afghan leader failed in their judgment and actions at many critical turns, setting the stage for the destruction of the Army of the Indus, the murder of Shah Shuja, and Dost Mohammed's return to power.⁴⁸ To start with, the British lived extravagantly. British womanizing of local Afghan women (Burnes was himself a participant), all the while being surrounded by the relative poverty of the Afghans, was a show of extreme disrespect and insult to the Afghans.⁴⁹ The Sikh advances to the north and west of the Suleiman Mountains called into question British motives in the eyes of the Afghans.⁵⁰ Shah Shuja was frustrated with a perceived lack of power.⁵¹ The British cut wages of builders in Kabul, as well as payments to tribal elders who helped provide overall security along the routes to and from Afghanistan.⁵² In the process of cutting the stipend to the tribal elders, Burnes attempted to reorganize the tribal security forces, without accounting for tribal structure which was a failure that would be repeated in future Afghan wars.⁵³ Finally, the British forces were not large enough to support the newly installed government outside of its main cantonment areas in Kabul, Kandahar, and Jalalabad.

By the fall of 1841, the British faced a revolt of significant proportions.⁵⁴ A failure in timely, effective response by the British leadership was the final misstep leading up to British destruction.⁵⁵ Many Britons holding positions of authority, including Burnes, would be

murdered at the outset of the insurrection.⁵⁶ Shah Shuja was not exempt and he was murdered at the hands of his fellow Afghans.⁵⁷ On January 6, 1842, the British Kabul garrison, totaling approximately 16,000 men, women, and children, attempted to flee after a purported agreement with the Afghans and were slaughtered or captured, save *one* man, over the course of a week.⁵⁸ The British response to this folly, the Army of Retribution who continued the cycle of *badal*, only deepened Afghan sentiments of distrust towards foreigners, and fed support for Dost Mohammed's form of jihad against foreigners.⁵⁹ After destroying Kabul, including its historic bazaar and fortress, the British withdrew, only to see Dost Mohammed and his Barakzai-tribe resume power.⁶⁰

Throughout the first 34 years of British involvement in Afghanistan, the British force made many errors that would be repeated by the Soviets and the NATO forces in the 20th and 21st centuries. Overall, they failed to appreciate the Pashtun-Afghan hierarchy of loyalty: first to clan, then sub-tribe, then tribe, and then to unite against outsiders. Afghan loyalty did not extend to the State.⁶¹ The British also did not understand the impact of their actions with respect to Pashtunwali and the Pashtun population. They made alliances based solely on their needs with their overtures to Shah Shuja both in 1809 and in 1839, to the Sikhs, and in overtures to Dost Mohammed in 1837. In rejecting Burnes' decision to keep Dost Mohammed, or then to utilize him as *wazir*, the British failed to sort through the desires of their own multitude of power brokers, neglecting the advice of their representative (Burnes) while also failing to use the Sadozai-Barakzai feud to their benefit. In their individual actions with the locals, they failed to spend the time necessary building relationships, and they had repeated instances of British representatives acting in a manner that was disrespectful to the Afghan community. They failed to understand the difficulty in getting tribes to pay homage to a centralized government because

they did not understand the impact of Afghan topography, social structures, and societal norms on the political system. Finally, they installed a leader that was viewed as a puppet of the British. Elphinstone described the Afghan environment best, "To sum up the character of the Afghans in a few words; their vices are revenge, envy, avarice, rapacity and obstinacy; on the other hand, they are fond of liberty, faithful to their friends, kind to their dependents, hospitable, brave, frugal, laborious, and prudent."⁶²

The Soviet Invasion

"When the highest political leaders of the USSR sent its forces into this war, they did not consider the historic, religious, and national particularities of Afghanistan."⁶³ *David Loyn*

The British clearly suffered tactical defeat in the First Anglo-Afghan War, and some would contend that the British efforts resulted in their strategic success in that no other invader interfered in the EIC. Others would contend that Russia never intended to go to India in the first place, so the British strategy was not a strategy at all, but rather misguided tactical actions based on faulty assumptions. Regardless of the point of view, the British continued to return to Afghanistan to engage in both diplomacy and confrontation until 1919.⁶⁴ In that process, they defined the eastern boundary for the Afghan state as it is known today.⁶⁵ The Durand Line divided the Pashtun people, tribes, and sub-tribes, creating an area of social unrest and infighting. The subsequent ethnic divide along a porous border directly supported the defeat of the Soviets, and to this date, prevented NATO's and the Afghan government's ability to create the conditions for sustainable stability.

By 1978, Afghanistan wrestled with communist-driven internal reforms. These reforms had an impact on Pashtun tribes across the Durand Line.⁶⁶ This collision of old and new, of progressivism versus fundamentalism, compounded with political/ideological wrangling between the United States and the Soviet Union, created a tinderbox that eventually set the conditions for

the defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan while destroying significant portions of Afghan infrastructure as the majority of the educated Afghan population fled. The Soviets never intended to “invade” Afghanistan with conventional forces; they wanted it as a communist client-state to combat the expansion of democracy while spreading communist virtue.⁶⁷

In 1978 the social and economic reforms initiated first by Zahir Shah, and then reinforced by Mohammed Daoud Khan, were accelerated following the communist Saur Revolution.⁶⁸ When the newly empowered Afghan communists changed the flag, painted the schools, expanded women’s rights, and redistributed land while cancelling rural debt, rural landlords began an insurgency that threatened the government.⁶⁹ However, the insurgency did not begin after the Saur Revolution; it had simmered since the days of British conquests and accelerated during the social reforms of the mid-20th century.

Islamic fundamentalism directly countered the social reform movements in Afghanistan. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a Pashtun with no tribal affiliation, fled in the early 1970s to Pakistan to receive Islamic fundamentalist training.⁷⁰ Ahmed Shah Massud, a Tajik, also received Islamic fundamentalist training in Pakistan in the early 1970s.⁷¹ Hekmatyar and Massud led separate Mujahidin campaigns that frustrated Daoud’s leadership. In time, with funding from the United States and Saudi Arabia and training opportunities in Pakistan, they ultimately organized two of the main Islamic fundamentalist forces, or mujahidin, that unhinged the Soviet campaign.⁷²

In the late 1970s, as social reforms swept Afghanistan, a rural, Maoist-like insurgency began to boil amongst a religiously zealous, uneducated population. The new communist government installed by the Saur Revolution needed help. Nur Mohammed Taraki, the Afghan communist leader and a Soviet puppet, requested Soviet intervention some 20 times over a year, while as many as 50,000 Afghans died in the fighting, mostly in Herat.⁷³ In his requests for

intervention, Taraki went so far as to specify that those assigned to intervene come from southern Soviet states dressed in Afghan uniforms while putting Afghan markings on their vehicles to prevent alarming the population of foreign intervention.⁷⁴ The Soviets rejected the request in favor of their own interests. The Soviet excuse for failing to provide assistance was that the Saur Revolution did not fully embody a communist revolution because Afghanistan lacked a proletariat.⁷⁵ Additionally, after a Soviet advisor witnessed the popular uprising and massacre in Herat in 1979, he advised the Politburo to support the Afghan communist regime with forces sufficient to quell the uprising.⁷⁶ As with the response from EIC to Burnes' desire to see Dost Mohammed left in power in 1837, the Soviets failed to take the advice of the advisor in Afghanistan and support Taraki until it was too late. The window of opportunity for successful intervention by the Soviets vanished. During this period of unrest, the Soviets failed to focus on the needs of their client-state and failed to heed advice from Taraki or their Soviet advisors.

As 1979 drew to a close, the security situation deteriorated rapidly. Taraki was killed by agents of his prime minister.⁷⁷ As with the British in 1837 and 1838, many conflicting Soviet leadership viewpoints were debated on how to resolve the situation.⁷⁸ Although it is uncertain who within the Politburo made the decision to invade, ultimately what came to be seen as an undersized Soviet force of approximately 80,000 troops began their invasion on December 22, 1979. The invasion was expected to last only long enough to change the leadership in the government and provide initial stability for that government.⁷⁹

Similar to the British in 1839 and 1879, and NATO in 2001, the Soviets encountered little resistance upon invasion, causing some Soviet leaders to declare premature victory. In March 1980 a popular uprising in Kandahar resulted in the massacre of Soviet forces and civilians, ultimately changing the Soviet approach from supporting the population and its

government to attacking the insurgency.⁸⁰ No longer would the Soviets remain in their cantonment areas.⁸¹ However, the Soviets were not equipped, trained, or led to fight a counterinsurgency.⁸² During the initial years of the occupation, the Soviet approach to counterinsurgency operations routinely involved excessive force and plundering, stoking the embers of dissent among the population.⁸³

To combat the growing insurgency, the Afghan government reversed policy decisions to engender support from the population. The government reverted to the historic flag, provided salaries to Muslim leaders, and built mosques. All of these actions failed.⁸⁴ Comparable to challenges faced by NATO in OEF, corruption within the government was also rampant.⁸⁵ Additional factors supporting the insurgency included geographic safe havens for the Mujahidin, a lack of popular support for the communist regime, a lack of an educated population base, Soviet removal of the judicial system, trained guerilla leaders such as Hekmatyar and Massud leading the Mujahidin, the training of children in madrassas in Pakistan and the frontier region, and the Pashtunwali principle guiding revenge against foreign invaders.⁸⁶ Finally, the Soviets miscalculated how the United States would respond to an invasion, believing that the United States would avoid confrontation. Contrary to Soviet assumptions, in 1980 President Carter authorized covert operations to support the Mujahidin.⁸⁷

Complicating the situation, United States Representative Charlie Wilson, amongst others, saw an opportunity to kill Soviets.⁸⁸ Motivated by America's tactical loss in Vietnam, he escalated the conflict with funding appropriations funneled through Pakistan to the Mujahidin.⁸⁹ In 1985, his ushering of the Stinger missile and other previously forbidden equipment changed battlefield dynamics, breaking a stalemate between the Soviet army, the Afghan National Army, and the Mujahidin.⁹⁰ As United States investments in Afghanistan increased, so did that of other

countries in the Middle East, especially from the Saudi government.⁹¹ The porous Northwest-Frontier border, defined by the Durand Line, served as the funnel, and provided the training ground.⁹² All opportunities for Soviet success were eliminated. In 1988 the Soviets capitulated, agreeing to leave Afghanistan within twelve months.

From the year before the invasion to the Soviet withdrawal, Soviet and British failure points are strikingly similar. The Soviets fundamentally misunderstood Afghan society and religion. This served as the basis for communist failure. When social reform caused civil unrest, the Soviet desire to satisfy only Soviet interests prevented an effective, timely response to that unrest. The Soviet response to counter the insurgents following the Kandahar massacre was similar to the British response to the destruction of the Kabul garrison—it was heavy-handed and inappropriately applied, further driving the insurgency by inflaming Afghan social norms like Pashtunwali. Soviet soldiers' flagrant violations of the laws of war further engendered support to the Mujahidin. The Soviet choice of leadership for Afghanistan was ill-received by the population. The Soviets dissolved the courts, and thus the rule of law. Finally, with a lack of security and poor infrastructure, the Afghans were unable to provide for themselves and meet their basic needs. When these conditions were coupled with outside aid and assistance from the United States, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, the Soviets were bound to fail.

Operation ENDURING FREEDOM

"The leadership of al Qa'ida has great influence in Afghanistan and supports the Taliban regime in controlling most of that country. In Afghanistan, we see al Qa'ida's vision for the world."

President George W. Bush, September 20, 2001

After the withdrawal of the Soviet Union in 1989 and the near-complete destruction of Afghan infrastructure, funding from the United States and Saudi Arabia to the Mujahidin continued via Pakistan. The U.S. was interested in defeating communism and it is unlikely that the U.S. understood the consequences of continuing to send money to a fundamental-Islamic

force, creating “a network of jihadis without a jihad.”⁹³ Pakistan also continued their support to the Mujahidin, focusing on seeing Hekmatyar ascend to power due to the belief that Hekmatyar would best represent Pakistani interests in Afghanistan.⁹⁴ Saudi Arabian Wahabis provided financing, education, and indoctrination to the Islamic fundamentalists.⁹⁵ With the exodus of the educated population base following the Saur Revolution and Soviet invasion, the mullahs taught fundamental Islam in madrassas, providing essentially the only education for the children.⁹⁶ Finally, the Mujahidin continued to turn-back women’s rights, possibly interpreting the Pashtunwali principle of *Namus* (Honor of Women) to support their own desires.⁹⁷

Aside from Hekmatyar and Massud’s Mujahidin were other Pashtun-organized Mujahidin in the south of Afghanistan.⁹⁸ During the Soviet invasion, these organizations received far less funding than Hekmatyar’s and Massud’s forces.⁹⁹ These Mujahidin were ideologically driven, and were dissatisfied with the instability that followed the Soviet withdrawal. Consequently, the Taliban formed in 1994.¹⁰⁰ Akin to Dost Mohammed, Mullah Mohammed Omar, the leader of the Taliban, donned the Prophet Mohammed’s purported cloak, declaring his position of leadership.¹⁰¹ When the Taliban forces grew in size and power and took control of Afghanistan, they received funding from and through Pakistan.¹⁰² The Taliban brought rule of law and continued the system of madrassas education for Afghan children.¹⁰³ Unfortunately, their dedication to fundamental Islam brought unwanted guests.

Seeking refuge, Osama Bin Laden with his fundamental approach to Islam came to Afghanistan in 1996. The Taliban tacitly supported him and Al Qaeda when they refused to force him from the country.¹⁰⁴ Taliban support to Osama Bin Laden and his Al Qaeda network likely tied to two Pashtunwali principles, *Nanawatai* (asylum) and *Melmastin* (hospitality),¹⁰⁵ and was reinforced with Al Qaeda funding to the Taliban. Al Qaeda began to flourish as it

planned and executed the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in Africa from its safe haven in Afghanistan. Effective Al Qaeda strategic communication against America's cruise-missile response to the embassy bombings emboldened Islamic-fundamentalists everywhere, and undoubtedly led to a growing Al Qaeda movement, and 9/11.¹⁰⁶

The U.S.-led invasion in response to the 9/11 attacks created a window of opportunity to stabilize Afghanistan and significantly derail Al Qaeda.¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately, like the Soviets and the British in past wars, the security force was vastly undersized, and largely restricted to operating in Kabul. Following initial success against the Taliban, the U.S.'s and NATO's leading concerns became attempting to redevelop Afghanistan and install an "acceptable" form of government, reconstituting Afghanistan security forces, and rebuilding infrastructure. Social reform issues, such as women's rights, were written into a new Afghan Constitution.¹⁰⁸ From a security perspective, the Durand Line again was an issue—the invasion only pushed Al Qaeda and the Taliban out of Afghanistan, across the Durand Line into Pakistan, vice destroying them.¹⁰⁹ The failure to adequately resolve this security concern coupled with poorly implemented governance and stagnated development had tragic consequences.

To create Afghanistan governance, a NATO-led conference formed in Bonn, Switzerland to set the conditions to write the Afghanistan Constitution.¹¹⁰ The Constitution was written in secrecy under the direction of the interim executive, the future President Hamid Karzai.¹¹¹ The Constitution ultimately contained key elements of cronyism that also served to undermine tribal structure. First, the President had the authority to appoint Provincial Governors.¹¹² Given the tribal, compartmentalized nature of Afghanistan, selecting leaders at the "local" level through an elective process would have empowered traditional tribal structure to resolve issues of leadership, uniting various tribes or sub-tribes within a province. As written, the President's

power of appointment allows the President to appoint not necessarily the most qualified and respected governor, but a governor that suits the President's political needs.

The power to select judges at all levels below the Supreme Court was relegated to members of the Supreme Court, and those selections required Presidential appointment.¹¹³ However, members of the Supreme Court were also presidential appointees.¹¹⁴ The President had the ultimate appointment authority for all judges, police officers, and uniformed military officers.¹¹⁵ Overall, the Constitution, as written, does not facilitate using the tribal social construct.

The United States empowered Hamid Karzai in 2002 to lead the new Afghan government. Similar to the First Anglo-Afghan War and the Soviet invasion, the invader installed a leader whose political viability has been questioned repeatedly in recent years. Internal and international questions regarding Karzai's reelection in 2009 and his delay in seating the Parliament after the August 2010 elections (they were not seated until January 2011), when coupled with his overall popularity, calls into question Karzai's longevity without NATO-provided support.¹¹⁶

As in previous wars, the United States and then NATO-led forces failed to set the security conditions needed across the country to rebuild its infrastructure or allow the new government to gain acceptance. At the outset, with the Taliban across the Durand Line, or quietly regrouping in Afghanistan, they were not defeated. While the Taliban rebuilt its base of support, development floundered in Afghanistan. A lack of an educated population base, coupled with lack of popular support crippled the raising of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and local police forces required to maintain rule of law. Local governance subsequently faltered. Rampant corruption in local and national Afghan government hindered local support,

engendering popular support of the Taliban. With 90%+ of the Afghanistan gross domestic product donated from other nations, multiple governments could potentially leverage Afghan policy, not necessarily in concert with the direction of NATO.¹¹⁷ With a disenfranchised population base, ineffective and relatively unsupported Afghan governance, and poor security conditions, the Taliban seized the initiative in 2006, gaining control of a significant number of communities, especially across the Pashtun south.

In early 2008, and then again in 2009 and 2010, NATO-led security forces nearly doubled in size, vastly improving the ability of NATO forces to conduct counter-terrorism and security aspects of counterinsurgency operations. At the same time, the increase in force structure allowed NATO forces, partnered with budding Afghan National Security Forces (including police and ANA, amongst others) to establish local security by physically occupying select population centers and limiting Taliban influence.¹¹⁸ The Obama administration revised United States strategic objectives and publicly acknowledged those objectives at a speech at West Point in December 2009, with the Quadrennial Defense Review in 2010, and again in the National Security Strategy published in May 2010. The National Security Strategy stated, "In Afghanistan, we must deny al-Qa'ida a safe haven, deny the Taliban the ability to overthrow the government, and strengthen the capacity of Afghanistan's security forces and government so that they can take lead responsibility for Afghanistan's future."¹¹⁹ With the increase in resources, especially ground forces, security improved and Helmand Province and Kandahar began to reject the Taliban in 2009 and 2010.¹²⁰

However, despite the recent improvements in security and local governance in select areas of Afghanistan, Afghanistan is far from achieving sustainable stability, and U.S. and NATO tactical and operational failures in the first eight years of the war bear striking

resemblance to that of the Soviets and the British. At the time of invasion, the U.S. failed to understand the social fabric of Afghanistan and did not truly focus on the needs of the Afghan people. An undersized security force failed to hunt down and finish the ousted Taliban government. The installation of a new government was not wedded with the existing tribal social construct, and it was coupled with excessive governmental corruption. Social reform initiatives and the social conduct of the occupier were not well received by the population. With a lack of rule of law, deteriorating security, and an inability of the population to meet their basic needs, the Taliban resurged, as did the potential for strategic failure—that is, a failure to prevent the resurgence of conditions that caused the 9/11 attacks.

A Bid for Success in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM: Applying Strategic Lessons

“The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.” *Albert Einstein*

With a nine and a half year old war, popular support is waning from contributing NATO partners. When a decrease in popular support is coupled with current worldwide economic conditions, it is difficult to envision countries sustaining their commitment to on-going and long-term counterinsurgency (COIN) operations that COIN theory suggests are necessary to create the conditions for Afghan governance and reconstruction to take root. President Karzai’s base of Afghan support is questionable. Developing a literacy base and education system necessary to fully support a democratic government will take at least a generation, and that is only if both parents and children can receive the education they sorely need. External influence, in the form of monetary donations and the relatively unabated training of Taliban fighters on the Pakistani-side of the Durand Line are problematic. Given these conditions, it is time to utilize lessons from history and modify our approach to achieve our strategic objectives in a bid for success.

First and foremost, our social conduct as “occupiers” must be beyond reproach. We cannot afford to foster a perception of living a lavish lifestyle in Afghanistan while Afghans suffer. The concept of “restraint,” which I define as living with the people with whom you are charged to protect, judiciously applying force, and supporting Afghan solutions to their problems, must be consistently applied at all levels. The Soviets and the British failed in this regard, and it unnecessarily led to their demise. The more our forces live with the Afghan population until security is established and turned over to Afghan security forces, the better. We must be seen with the people at all times.

Secondly, and undoubtedly most contentiously, we either need to abandon our physical security support for President Karzai, or force him and his government to rewrite their Constitution. If we withdraw our physical security support to President Karzai and economic funding for his government, he will either succeed on his own merits, an uprising will remove him from power, or he will flee, allowing the population to choose who they want in power. We will need to support that person, which will be difficult if that person’s vision of governance and social values differs largely from that of western society. If Karzai retains his presidency, our relationship with him will be tenuous at best. However, if history provides any relevant examples, he will not remain in power for long. While this method sounds extreme, one should consider the historical outcomes of the First Anglo-Afghan War and the Soviet invasion. Invader-installed government leaders failed in both circumstances and were followed by dictators who were more extreme than the leader that was in office before the invasion. The British ultimately suffered an unacceptable defeat, at significant cost in lives and infrastructure to both the British and the Afghans. The Soviet Union withdrew, with more than a million Afghans killed, and anywhere from 25,000-75,000 Soviet Union service-members killed, resulting in their

Afghan strategy failing. In both cases the Afghan people viewed the invader-installed leader as a puppet, failed to support him, and eventually murdered the installed leader. President Karzai's public standing, potentially viewed as a puppet by his own people, foreshadows a repeat similar to the last two historical examples.

Possibly less contentious is to force the Afghan government to modify their Constitution. If President Karzai is given an either/or option (stop protecting him or rewriting the Constitution), he may choose to rewrite the Constitution if he believes this course of action will better support his longevity. The new Constitution must be devoid of nepotism in the form of Presidential appointment of Provincial governors, along with the appointment of police officers, armed forces officers, and judges. The tribes must be able to speak for themselves in the election process to determine who oversees rule of law at the Provincial level, and with those who enforce rule of law. In the south, *Pashtunwali* will help sort out the leadership, and will adhere to its historical, effective social construct. In other parts of the country, the populations' social norms in those areas will also help determine who will fill the leadership positions within the community. One reason for past central government failure in Afghanistan is because of the failure to design a government that facilitated use of the tribal construct.

The Afghans, without western influence, will need to decide if women's rights will gain acceptance with their constituency. No doubt, if women's rights are curtailed, this will be an issue that may cause some elements of NATO to leave Afghanistan. One must consider if this outcome will affect our overall ability to achieve our strategy, as the economics of the situation will probably drive those countries to leave anyway, and this will merely be an excuse to do so. It is important to note that social reform issues such as land reform and women's suffrage were causal factors that led to the overthrow of Zahir Shah in 1973 and then Mohammed Daoud Khan

in 1978 with the Saur Revolution. Before the Saur Revolution, Islamic fundamentalists were already frustrated with social reform. Throughout the Soviet invasion, elements of the Mujahidin were involved in turning back reform. The Taliban accelerated the pace of implementing Islamic fundamentalism in the 1990s. Given the historical precedent, it must be up to the Afghans if they believe women's suffrage is sustainable. This is an Afghan problem, requiring an Afghan solution.

Simultaneously, both Afghans and their NATO partners need to continue to set the security conditions necessary for reconstruction and development for local governance to flourish. In previous invasions, both the British and the Soviets failed in this endeavor, in part due to an under-sized force, and also due to a failure to focus on the needs of the population. Second Marine Expeditionary Brigade's Task Force Leatherneck (TFL) campaign in Helmand Province in 2009 and 2010, along with continued Regional Command South-West (RC-SW) operations are an example of success. In places like Nawa, Now Zad, and Marjah, all formerly Taliban strong-holds local police forces are being developed and ANA continue to partner with the Marines to provide necessary security. Additionally, tribal security operations are filling security voids. With the establishment of security, governance and rule of law are taking hold.

TFL achieved their success, and RC-SW followed it up, by simply applying the counterinsurgency principles prescribed in Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*. The concept of "clear-hold-build-transition" was followed, with Marines first clearing selected areas to establish security. Counter-terrorism strikes supported this effort. ANA came in to support the Marines, and where the ANA forces did not exist or were insufficiently trained, TFL raised the ANA forces such as the 205th Corps and conducted the necessary training.¹²¹ With security conditions set, local Afghans stood up and took positions of leadership, to include service as

police officers within their communities. Those police officers were subsequently provided training adopted from ISAF and implemented by TFL—the pipeline was too long to get the police officers to ISAF-sponsored training programs in Kabul. The training was necessary to fix corruption issues within the police, who were feared by the population, which is one of the reasons why the Taliban were allowed to resurge in 2006. Throughout, Marine units partnered with the police, ANA, and burgeoning governments at all levels of leadership, to provide a positive example, and to bolster the confidence of the Afghans. With the Taliban unable to support the purchase and refinement of poppy, and with the security situation improving, farmers turned to alternative crop programs, some sponsored by organizations like the U.S. Agency for International Development, and others created locally by Seventh Marine Regiment like the Marjah Agricultural Assistance Transition Program to better fit the situation.¹²² With these conditions met, local reconstruction and development, focused on small-scale projects at the village level took root to rebuild the basic infrastructure such as medical clinics and schools needed by the population. The first village and district security transitions from Marine-led to Afghan-led/administered are projected to start in the summer of 2011.

While TFL's and RC-SW's record of success in installing security and supporting the development of governance and reconstruction and development are commendable, more must be done at the strategic and operational level to fix the external security issues presented by the Durand Line, training of indigenous forces, improving the rule of law, and developing a means for a self-sustaining Afghan economy. Pakistan security issues across the Durand Line are the proverbial white-elephant in the room. On-going Central Intelligence Agency targeting of Taliban in Pakistan and continued engagement with the Pakistani government to encourage targeting the Taliban, which may include *withholding financial support for failing to target the*

Taliban, are probably the only NATO-driven solutions that will work at the present time. Any other solutions will need to be developed by the Afghan government, and led by the Pashtun tribes that live along the border. It is possible that when Afghan-based Pashtun tribes are satisfied that their needs are being met and when they receive fair representation in their governance which embraces their tribal nature that the border security issue will resolve itself. Crossing any mountain range or desert is no easy task and requires logistics support in the form of food, water, and shelter. If Afghan-based Pashtun tribes are truly satisfied with their governance, and benefit from it, then in-coming fighters will likely lose some of their logistics bases in Afghanistan that they need to continue to launch attacks further inside the country.

Nearly as challenging as the porous border issue is the raising and training of Afghan security forces. Major Eric E. Greek, USA, *Joint Forces Quarterly* article, "The Security Trinity: Understanding the Role of Security Forces in COIN," speaks volumes to the disparate approach to training security forces, especially the police, but offers no recommendations.¹²³ One possible solution is to continue to centralize the development of the training curriculum for the police and ANA, but then allow for decentralized execution of that training to the Regional Command level. TFL utilized this model, modifying existing police training programs to suit the needs of their area of operations. When TFL left Afghanistan in April 2010, nearly 100% of the Afghan Local Police in their area of operations were trained, as compared to approximately 5% when they arrived. The training of the police by TFL was not easy, with high drop-out rates due to illicit activities, including drug use, by the students. However, by putting trained police officers on the streets of the villages, corruption dropped to an acceptable level and local support for the police went up, resulting in security improving in much of Helmand Province.¹²⁴

I participated in a variation of this model in Fallujah, Iraq, in training Iraqi soldiers in late 2004 and early 2005 after Operation AL FAJR. As the Iraqi soldiers' proficiency increased, the Iraqis began to take on lead security responsibilities. During my tenure as an advisor to the Iraqi army in 2006, I and approximately 60 of my colleagues worked with an independent brigade of Iraqi soldiers. As confidence from the local populace improved, support from the local populace, in the form of the Anbar Awakening, took place allowing the Iraqi army to conduct more focused, counter-terrorism and security tasks. Also during that year, and in the following year, as local police capabilities increased, the Iraqi Brigade was freed to participate in combat operations in Basra and Mosul, leaving local security to the villages and police forces.

The model of partnering with and conducting basic and reinforcing training at local levels such as Al Anbar Province in Iraq and at the Regional Command level in Afghanistan will work, given appropriate resourcing (including recruiting and funding) and appropriate selection of advisors. Additionally, it will work in a relatively short period of time, likely in two to three years. The local police, army forces, and tribal security forces (which should morph into police forces) do not need to be as good as NATO, rather, they need to be locally trusted and possess the ability to enforce the rule of law. Resourcing and logistics of the Afghan army in particular will always be a challenge, like we experienced in Al Anbar. The keys to success include recognizing that the Afghan army requires leave to get their pay to their families, that they need equipment that fits the tasks they are required to perform *and* can be sustained once we leave, and that they will require continual reinforcing of their values to limit corruption.

Likewise, Captain Mark R. Hagerott, USN, et al *Joint Forces Quarterly Article*, "A Patchwork Strategy of Consensus: Establishing Rule of Law in Afghanistan," provides a framework to speed the development and effectiveness of judges through utilization of ISAF

resources.¹²⁵ One of the appeals of the Taliban was their ability to provide rule of law and the ability to resolve disputes. With ineffective or non-existent court-systems throughout Afghanistan, Afghans could not resolve their disputes. The Taliban filled that void and it must be closed. With appropriate levels of security, and tribal support for local governance, District and Provincial governors will have the influence necessary to see select members of the population appointed to the court system. Using ISAF judge advocate resources to train and mentor newly appointed judges will speed the enforcement of the rule of law.

Economic growth must also increase. For Afghanistan to limit undue influence by other external actors, they must have a semi self-sustaining economic model. Even in the 1950s and 1960s, when Afghanistan was at its highest point of stability in centuries, their gross domestic product was imbalanced in that donations from other countries met or exceeded locally produced tax revenue necessary to support required state functions. Multiple crop alternatives must be developed, not just wheat (which is largely viewed as an individually grown and consumed product), that have a market in both Afghanistan, and elsewhere in the world. If the security situation continues to stabilize, the trillions of dollars of raw materials that are in the ground in Afghanistan will be mined and exported, providing another means of economic self-sufficiency. Finally, taxation as prescribed by the current Afghan Constitution will need to be developed and implemented.¹²⁶ A government cannot run without funding, and to minimize influence from non-state and other-state actors, the government must generate sufficient revenue to fund its programs.

To make this bid for success supportable, it must be strategically communicated. If one reflects on the method of ratifying the United States Constitution in thirteen different states, they would note the absolute importance of the *Federalist Papers*. We are today's versions of

Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison to write, blog, twitter, and text the Afghan issues, breaking it down for the general public who is otherwise uninvolved in this process. On December 18, 2010, I checked the ISAF website, going straight to the "Commander's Update," and found that it had not been updated since September 13, 2010, when "COIN Contracting Guidance" was published.¹²⁷ One would think that the "Commander's Update" would be a frequently visited site for someone trying to understand what is taking place in Afghanistan, and three month old contracting guidance fails to communicate ISAF's perspective on the war. Likewise, on the cover of the ISAF web page was a cover story titled, "Large Explosive Caches Discovered in Sarobi."¹²⁸ While the story was interesting and showed Afghan support to ISAF, after reading the article I thought it would have been more interestingly titled, "Security Situation Improving: Local Afghans Provide Information Leading to the Discovery of Large Explosive Caches." On February 12, 2011, I noted that the "Commander's Update" changed to "Commander's Corner", and contained a letter from General Patreaus to the field, dated January 25, 2011, and an article on transition from February 3, 2011 since the "COIN Contracting Guidance" was published in September 2010.¹²⁹ I would think that nearly every day the commander experiences something of significance in Afghanistan that should be communicated to the world.

An informal survey conducted by one conference group at the Command and Staff College of 14 field grade officers at the beginning of the academic year in August 2010 found that not one officer could enunciate U.S. strategy for Afghanistan. Even more troubling was when a former senior White House official (who briefed members of the Marine Corps University in January 2011) could not answer the question posed by a student, "What is the U.S. strategy for Afghanistan?" On January 26, 2011, during the State of the Union address,

President Obama spelled out why defeat of the Taliban was important. Given the length of the speech and the focus on the economy, the placement of the President's comments on Afghanistan was probably not heard by many in America. We must do better, and we must start, at the governmental levels of the U.S., Afghanistan, and NATO/ISAF, by finding the authors that can spell out our policy, and publish it in every form of media available on a regular basis. Timothy Cunningham, in his *Joint Forces Quarterly* article, "Strategic Communication in the New Media Sphere," addresses many of these issues.¹³⁰ Every unit must have the authority to immediately publish what they are doing and why they are doing it, through blogging, *Facebook*, and other social media sites. If we cannot communicate our story, the waning popular support and focus on economic reform will subsume us, forcing us to leave Afghanistan before the necessary conditions are set, much like our predecessors did. This result will result in a failure to attain our strategic objectives.

Conclusion

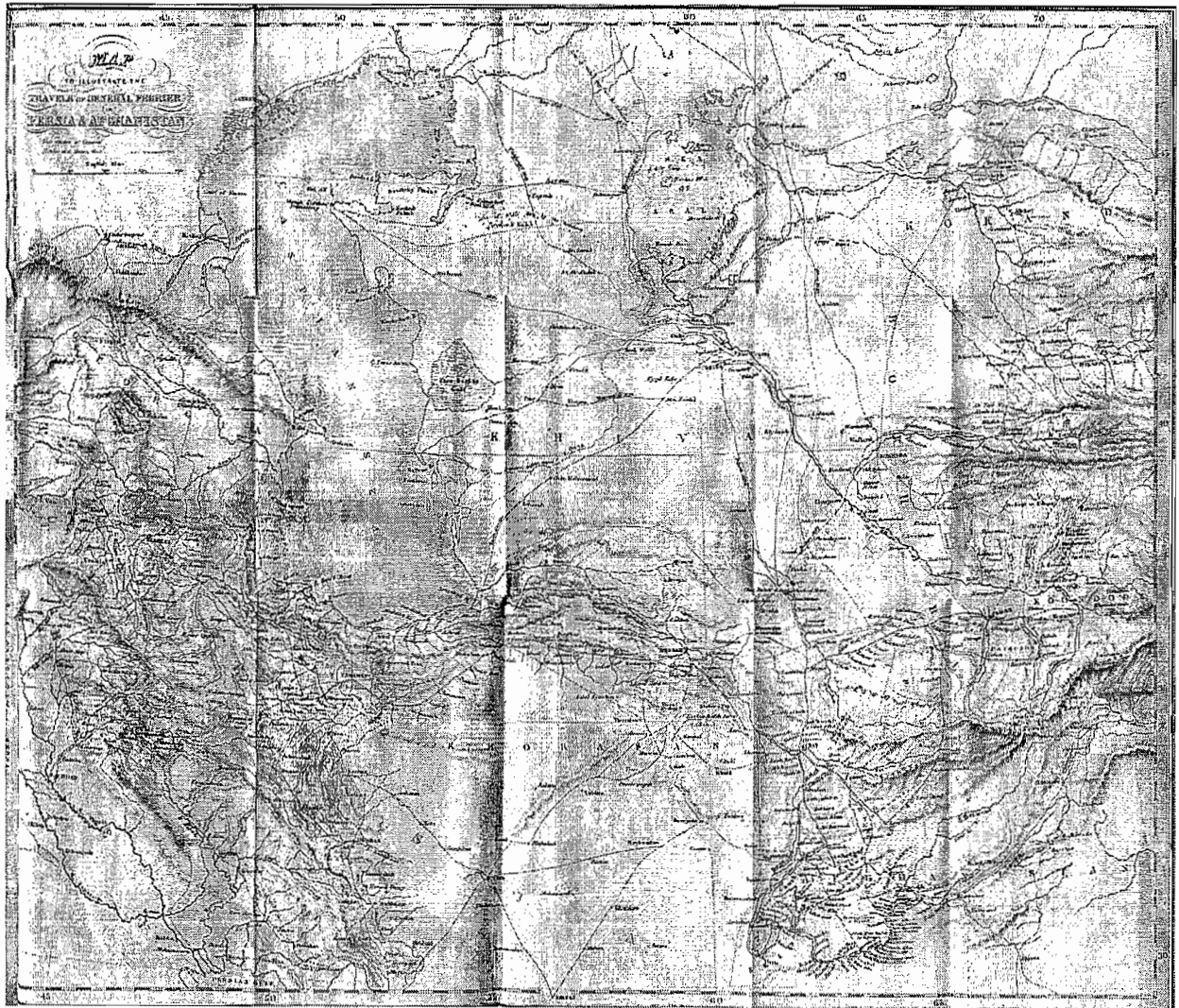
"If ISAF fails in Afghanistan, it would join the ranks of the British and Soviets in the shameful list of previous attempts to succeed by force in that country. More significantly, this outcome would bolster the Taliban and al Qaeda, and encourage wider unrest in the Middle East."¹³¹

Colonel Tarn D. Warren, USA

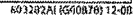
Establishing sustainable stability in Afghanistan is a strategic imperative. The cost of failure will result in a loss of trust by our world partners, further emboldening our enemies, thus further destabilizing global security. Historical lessons of failure from the First Anglo-Afghan War, the Soviet invasion, and the last nine and half years of OEF provide many lessons of what to do: support the needs of the Afghan people, accept that their solutions will differ from our solutions, assist them in creating the security conditions for governance and economic development, ensure restraint in our approach, *and then depart*. When those conditions are created, we can depart knowing that we fulfilled our promises. We will have the trust of the

Afghans and other allies around the world and our enemies will be degraded in their abilities to stage large scale attacks on us. A sustainable stability for Afghanistan is a strategic necessity.

Appendix A: Map, Afghanistan and Persia, 1856¹³²



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Appendix D: List of Acronyms

| <u>Acronym</u> | <u>Definition</u> |
|----------------|---|
| 2d MEB | 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade |
| ANA | Afghan National Army |
| COIN | Counterinsurgency |
| EIC | East India Company |
| ISAF | International Security Assistance Force |
| OEF | Operation Enduring Freedom |
| RC-SW | Regional Command Southwest |
| TFL | Task Force Leatherneck |

Endnotes

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- ⁵⁸ Jacobsen, conversation with author; James, 96; Loyn, 54-58; Meyer and Brysac, 104; Waller, 244. Dr. Jacobsen says the Kabul garrison numbered 14000, James and Meyer Brysac say 12000, Loyn says 16000. Waller estimates a total of 16000.
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⁸⁰ Cordovez and Harrison, 5, 58; Loyn, 145.

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⁸⁴ Loyn, 144; Maley, 79-81.

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⁸⁶ Loyn, 147-148, 203.

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⁸⁹ Cordovez and Harrison, 157; Loyn, 135, 149.

⁹⁰ Cordovez and Harrison, 160, 198-210; Loyn, 153-155.

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